

Elisha ~ Part 21

In my last post, we continued to explore the ministry of **Elisha** by looking at **2 Kings 8:1-6** where we learn three aspects of the **Greatness of Our God**. In this post, we continue the story of **Elisha** where we explore the **Wickedness of the Human Heart** in **2 Kings 8:7-15**.

"⁷ Elisha went to Dammesek. Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram, was ill; and he was told, 'The man of God has come here.'⁸ The king said to Haza'el, 'Take with you a gift, go meet the man of God and consult Adonai through him; ask if I will recover from this illness.'⁹ Haza'el went to meet him, taking with him a gift that included everything good Dammesek had, forty camel-loads. He came, stood before him and said, 'Your son Ben-Hadad king of Aram has sent me to you; he asks, 'Will I recover from this illness?'"¹⁰ Elisha answered, 'Go and say to him, 'You will surely recover'— even though Adonai has shown me that he will surely die.'¹¹ Then the man of God fixed his gaze on him for so long that Haza'el became embarrassed; finally, Elisha began to cry. ¹² Haza'el asked, 'Why is my lord crying?' He answered, 'Because I know the disasters you will bring on the people of Isra'el — you will set their fortresses on fire, you will kill their young men with the sword, you will dash their little ones to pieces and rip their pregnant women apart.'¹³ Haza'el said, 'But what is your servant? Nothing but a dog! How could he do anything of such magnitude?' Elisha answered, 'Adonai has shown me that you will be king over Aram.'¹⁴ Then he left Elisha and returned to his master, who asked him, 'What did Elisha say to you?' 'He told me you would surely recover.'¹⁵ The next day he took a blanket, dipped it in water and spread it on his face, so that he died; and Haza'el took his place as king.'" ~ 2 Kings 8:7-15 (CJB)

When the Lord met with the Prophet **Eliyahu** on Mount Horev (1 Kings 19:8-18), He gave him a threefold commission: to anoint **Haza'el** king of **Aram** (Syria), to anoint **Yehu** king of **Israel**, and to anoint **Elisha** to minister as his successor (1 Kings 19:15-16). Before his ascension to heaven, **Eliyahu** had fulfilled only one of those commissions, the anointing of **Elisha** (1 Kings 19:19-21), so we assume that he told **Elisha** to take care of the other two assignments. **Yehu** would become God's appointed scourge to rid the land of **Ach'av's** evil descendants as well as **Ach'av's** false religion.

The Mission of Elisha

It took faith and courage for **Elisha** to travel to **Dammesek**. After all, he had often thwarted **Aram's** plans for raiding **Israel's** border towns (6:9-12), and he had humiliated the **Aramian** army by leading them into **Shamron** and sending them home with full stomachs but empty hands (6:14-23). Because of **Elisha**, the **Aramian** army fled from **Shamron** and the Jewish people were able to loot their camp (7:1ff). But **Elisha** had also healed **Na'aman** the **Aramian** of his leprosy (5:1ff), and when **Elisha** brought the **Aramian** raiding party to **Shamron**, he showed them mercy and saved their lives. The fact that **Ben-Hadad** the **Aramian** king was very ill and wanted help from the Lord made **Elisha's** arrival more significant.

This was a pagan Gentile king seeking the help of a prophet of **Adonai**, but perhaps the conversion of **Na'aman** had something to do with it. Even more, **Ben-Hadad** sent **Haza'el**, one of his high officials, to meet **Elisha** and give him expensive gifts. But like his master, **Elisha** undoubtedly refused to accept the gifts (5:15-16). By calling the king of **Aram** "your son," **Haza'el** was seeking to add more honor to **Elisha**. Then he asked the key question: would the king of **Aram** recover from his sickness?

Elisha's replied that the King *will surely recover - even though Adonai has shown me that he will surely die*. In other words, the sickness was not terminal, but the king's life was about to be terminated. As a high officer of the king, **Haza'el** wanted to give the king good news, so he didn't convey to him the second part of the message.

Elisha stared at **Haza'el**, as though reading his mind and heart, and then the prophet broke into weeping. The Lord had shown him some of the violence and bloodshed that **Haza'el** would perpetrate, brutal acts that were normal practices in ancient warfare. **Haza'el's** reply indicated that he recognized his subordinate status in the government and wondered where he would get the authority to do those things. **Haza'el** would have all the authority he needed because he would become king of **Aram**. The text doesn't tell us, but this may have been the point at which **Elisha** anointed **Haza'el** with the sacred oil. If so, then **Haza'el** was the only king of **Israel**, the Northern Kingdom, to have the anointing of the Lord. He ruled **Aram** for forty-one years (841-801 CE).

In my next post, we conclude our exploration of the life of **Elisha**. In this last post in this series, we pick up the story in **2 Kings 13:14-21** to learn of **Elisha's Death**.